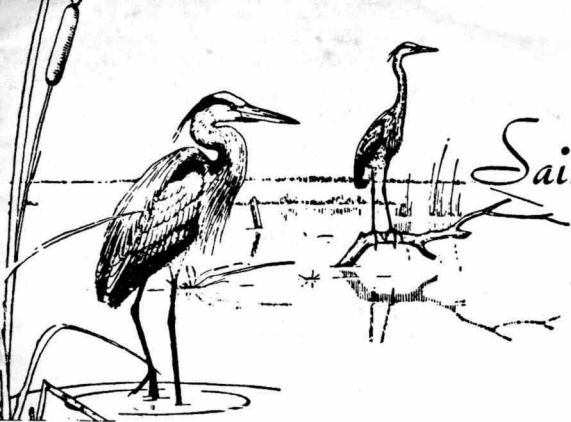




Saint Louis Audubon

BULLETIN

September, 1968

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SEASON'S SCHEDULE OF AUDUBON WILDLIFE FILMS

Sponsored by the St. Louis Society, the St. Louis Zoo Association and the National Audubon Society.

1968-1969 Program

Allan D. Cruickshank	Land of the Giant Cactus	Fri., Oct. 11, 1968
John Earl Taft	Central California's Coastal Plain	Fri., Nov. 8, 1968
Wilfred Gray	Four Seasons	Fri., Nov. 22, 1968*
Walter H. Berlet	Hawaii — Paradise of the Pacific	Tues., Jan. 21, 1969
Wally A. Rentsch	Water's Edge	Fri., Feb. 7, 1969*
Eben McMillan	Out Back Australia	Fri., March 7, 1969
Harry Pederson	The Bahamas—Top to Bottom	Fri., April 11, 1969
William Anderson	Designs for Survival	Fri., April 18, 1969*

*These programs to be held at Clayton High School. All remaining programs to be held at Third Baptist Church.

PRAIRIE CHICKEN, SQUAW CREEK AND HANNIBAL!

MARY C. WIESE

Russet, buff, pink, orange, chestnut, flame, gold, black. These are colors we associate with perching birds, but rarely do we use them about what Peter Matthiesen calls the "wind birds". We usually think of these shore shadows in shades of grey. We watch them wheel in tight formation and are delighted to catch a telltale patch of white. We glue our eyes to scopes to decide whether a muddy leg is yellowish or black, a black mottled or streaked, a side dotted or barred. And if we can pronounce definitively that one of these mousey birds is a Baird's and not a semi-palmated sandpiper, a short-billed rather than a long-billed dowitcher, we feel triumphant.

But the week-end of May 18th and 19th at Squaw Creek in north-western Missouri it was all different. Birders from various areas of the state gathered there, including several from the WGNs, the Dick Andersons, the Paul Bauers, and the Joel Massies and I. Everyone had a marvelous time. Certainly twenty-plus species of shore birds, all in breeding plumage is an

event in anyone's life, but I don't think anyone was more thrilled than I.

I've been trying to learn shore-birds ever since the years when we spent every August on Martha's Vineyard where I started with nondescript semi-palmated sandpipers. I went on from there to ruddy turnstones (handsome, but not in full plumage) and an occasional exciting willet or piping plover. I even started a controversy in the letters column of the Vineyard Gazette when I reported a single strange bird on the south shore in early September. Fairly long yellow-green legs, very white underneath, longish slender black bill, grey back, no wing stripe, white rump. After studying Peterson and the Vineyard records for possible off-course birds I decided it might be a stilt sandpiper. The one clue that I was missing at that time was the phalaropes don't have to be strictly oceanic, and that the Wilson's is really a shore-bird. And that's undoubtedly what it was, not the heavy billed stilt. So this week-end, to see a row of stilt sandpipers with a Wilson's phalarope behind them, all in full breeding plumage, was very satisfying.

But that's not all. The Massies and I met Dave Easterla with a student and he soon had us mucking through marshes that almost wouldn't let go of our feet. It was worth it however. We saw large numbers of both Wilson's and northern phalaropes, both marbled and Hudsonian godwits, golden and blackbellied plovers, ruddy turnstones, short-billed dowitchers, dunlins, sanderlings, all beautifully dressed in shades of rust, brown, black and white. We also saw all the peeps except the western. There probably were some of these, but there were too many hundreds of the exciting beautifully dressed birds to examine each insignificant grey shape for a down-turned bill and a reddish wing-patch. Of course, later we met the Bauers and the Andersons who reported they had seen all of the shore-birds we had without risking being permanently stuck in the mud. They had also seen yellow-headed black-birds which we missed, but we had an osprey they missed. Check and counter-check!

What they had on Sunday I don't know because we continued our trip across northern Missouri east to Hannibal. We stopped en route to check the Swan Lake wildlife refuge, east of Chillicothe. It must be exciting in winter when thousands of geese live there, but was disappointing in the middle of May, especially after Squaw Creek. We also went in to Mark Twain State Park near Florida, soon to be partially inundated by a dam on the Salt River. There were a few birds here, including a blue bird feeding two fledglings, but the main interest was the Mark Twain museum — and lunch! Later, on our way home, we checked viewpoints along the Mississippi and enjoyed looking down on large flocks of swallows, especially the lustrous purple martins and the rump-patched cliff swallows.

The purpose of this trip for the Massies was to scout possibilities for an Audubon post-convention trip next May. I tagged along, but I also served as a guinea pig to pay particular attention to birds which might have special interest to someone used to birding in a different part of the country. And I've saved the high spot for last.

We had left St. Louis on May 17th, a day ahead of the scheduled Squaw Creek gathering so that as we drove west we could check prairies, and possibilities for seeing prairie chickens. A stop at Tucker Prairie, near Kingdom City yielded beautiful flowers, especially shooting stars and wild indigo, but no unusual birds. We stopped in Jefferson City to seek information from Charles and Libby Schwartz, and incidentally to see the dramatic new conservation department quarters on the west edge of town. Mr. Schwartz showed us footage from a new film he is making on the prairie chicken, and gave us directions to a prairie south of Sedalia which had a spectacular stand of indian paintbrush. This prairie, unfortunately, has recently been sold and part of it plowed for the first time, including the area which had been the chickens' booming ground.

We arrived at Taberville prairie, near the Kansas border, in the late afternoon. The sight of a scissor-tailed flycatcher on the bale of hay reminded us that we had come south and west and were on the edge of an area where they are common. After checking into a motel in El Dorado Springs and picking up hamburgers, we hurried back to settle in one of several observation sheds constructed near the booming ground, on the highest point of the sloping prairie. A pair of marsh hawks skimmed over the valley below, barn swallows swooped in front of the blinds, and meadow larks sang their clear four notes. We also heard the hiccup of the Henslow's sparrow, which we had been told were common on this prairie, but we saw only one possible specimen. As the shadows lengthened and no chickens appeared we became increasingly afraid that the show was indeed over for the year, and that the birds were busy nesting now, and ignoring the booming ground. Finally, however, a hen flew in and settled down, immobile except for her constantly turning head. After a long interval her watchfulness as well as ours was rewarded, and a cock flew in. Typically female, she paid no more attention to him, and for quite a while he didn't seem to know she was there either. Then he started to move over to her, running a few steps and stopping, pecking at the ground, then moving again. Suddenly he stopped and we could see the feathers on the side of his head lift and the yellow sacs start to inflate. Now? Surely now he would start to strut and boom. No. Apparently it really was a little late in the season and he and she were just going through the motions without any real interest. He let his air sacs deflate and together the birds flew down into the valley, leaving behind them three rather deflated people. Deflated, but not entirely disappointed. We had seen the booming grounds, we had seen this pair of chickens, plus some others flying in the distance, and it had been, in Wordsworth's words, "a beauteous evening, calm and free". Next year, with luck, we could be here earlier in the year and see the full show, not just the teaser.

EXPERIMENT AT MAINE AUDUBON CAMP

DICK ANDERSON

Thanks to the St. Louis Audubon Society, I was privileged to attend the Maine Audubon Camp the last two weeks of August, 1967. Advance information from the camp was most complete as to what to bring and what to read in preparation. I was also informed by many who had attended that there would be several courses, some compulsory and some elective. However, shortly after our arrival, we found our program had been changed. Instead of individual subject, such as botany, ornithology, etc., we were to study all subjects, tied together, under the heading of "Ecology". This was a word we were to hear often and was the key to our studies on Hog Island. For example, on our first outdoor class we crossed to the mainland and studied an open field. Instead of only looking at birds or flowers or insects, we studied the complete habitat. We studied plants and what life they supported, then insects and what life they supported and on up the life chain. This was then the pattern, whether we were in woods or on the seashore. Although we were told this had never been done before, it was explained that a bird walk or botany walk might be very similar, but the emphasis was put on ecology rather than just birds or plants.

Obviously, to make this plan work, a good teaching staff is required. All the campers were impressed with the staff. Not only were they knowledgeable, but were able to communicate their thoughts to the campers. We were fortunate to have a botanist the caliber of Miss Farida Wiley, a

marine biologist the caliber of Dr. Arthur Borror and an ornithologist the likes of Joe Cadbury. However, these specialists and other staff members were so well versed in other forms of nature, it was difficult to be sure of their specialities in the field. A most remarkable staff indeed.

Not all of our classes were outside. We had many indoor lectures on weather, geology, soil conservation, etc. Some of these lectures seemed dull by comparison, but were factual and necessary to the understanding of the total scheme of nature. Evening meetings included ecology lectures, movies, listening to bird records and outside astronomy lessons. Our field trips varied considerably, but since we were on an island in an ocean bay, there was much emphasis on marine life. We visited shores of sand, rock and mud. We studied life on the water's surface as well as dragging the ocean floor. We collected plankton from the surface and studied them under a microscope. They are the animals at a start of a life chain that goes on to man himself. We were told the names of hundreds of marine animals, few of which I'll ever remember. I don't remember how to tell a rough periwinkle from a common periwinkle, but I do remember that there were three species of periwinkles and each filled a particular niche in the ecology of the sea-shore. Emphasis was placed more on becoming aware of all aspects of nature rather than memorizing a lot of names.

I was impressed with all the classes, but to a birder the boat trips were most exciting. Water birds of particular interest included common eiders, black Guillemots, great cormorants, Arctic terns, black-backed gulls, and the three species of scoters. Many shorebirds were common. Many species of land birds were observed including both crossbills and common ravens.

There were two social highlights during the two weeks. The first was an old-fashioned clam and lobster boil. The second event was a banquet on our last night. This is an annual event for the last dinner of the camp year. Mr. Buchheister, former National Audubon president, came up as did Mrs. Dodd, who originally donated the land for the Audubon Camp.

This is a very short summary of a wonderful experience. For complete details we suggest a two week visit to the Maine Audubon Camp.

RESCUED

The Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary near Naples, Fla., considered one of the most important wilderness and wildlife preserves in the United States, has been saved from almost certain death by man-made drought. Last month, the National Audubon Society, which maintains and operates the sanctuary, successfully completed a two-year, \$696,000 fund-raising campaign to rescue the swamp. The money was needed to buy 2,640 acres, which should keep commercial land development from draining the preserve of water needed to sustain swamp ecology, including the nation's largest surviving stand of virgin bald cypress.

Recently the society acquired 1,680 acres of virgin swamp and marshland bordering the Corkscrew Swamp. This brings the total area of the Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary to 10,400 acres. The cost of the additional land was \$364,375.

The St. Louis Audubon Society contributed \$500.00 to the campaign.

FROM KILAUEA TO KILAUEA

BERTHA MASSIE

"The Volcano is due to have another active phase within the next few hours" was the news that greeted us upon our arrival at Hilo, Hawaii. Since we were staying at Volcano House which is located on the rim of the crater (more correctly caldera) we were able to watch the increasing activity of Kilauea Volcano in the distance. Later we drove to the viewing stand on the edge of Halemaumau Crater within the caldera where we watched the hot lava spurting up in magnificent yellow, orange and red fountains and spilling out of the lava lake in great rivers of molten magma with large sections of solid rock embedded in the viscous material. This first night was the high point of the trip . . . timing an arrival to coincide with the activity of a volcano isn't easy.

The trip to Hawaii was another of the Crowder Nature Tours and this time the thirteen participants and two leaders had a wonderful look at the various aspects of the natural scene. Geology in this setting, particularly when a volcano cooperates by erupting, becomes a must. The birds of Hawaii, although not too numerous, are particularly interesting for the endemic species including the entire family of the Drepanididae (Hawaiian Honeycreepers). The vegetation, which is so foreign to anything we know in St. Louis and again with many endemic forms provided another challenge.

In our five days on the Island of Hawaii we saw nine of the Hawaiian endemics including the Nene Goose, the Hawaiian Hawk, the Omao (Hawaiian Thrush), the Elepaio (an Old World Flycatcher) and five of the Drepanididae — the Apapane, a common bird at Volcano House, the Iiwi with its brilliant scarlet coloring and long curved bill, the Amakihi, the Creeper, and a fleeting look at the Palila on the slopes of Mauna Kea. The seventeen Nenes, all of which were banded but living in the wild were seen in pairs except for one group of three, on the Kahuku-Ainapo Trail, a jeep trail half way between Volcano House and the Kona coast. Limitations of time did not permit us to ascertain the meaning of the bands which showed considerable variation in color. Many Nene have been raised at the Severn Wildfowl Trust in England by Peter Scott and when I visited Slimbridge in 1965 geese were being prepared for shipment back to Hawaii. Our list for the island also included the Greater Frigatebird, California Quail, Japanese Green and Ring-necked Pheasants, the ever present (in winter) Golden Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Wandering Tattler, White-capped Noddy, Rock Dove (Feral birds near South Cape), Spotted and Barred Doves, Short-eared Owl, Skylark, Mockingbird, Indian Mynah, Japanese White-eye, Ricebird, House Sparrow, Cardinal and House Finch.

A short flight took us to the island of Maui where we saw members of the Hawaiian race of the Black-necked Stilt at Kanaha Ponds as we drove from the airport to the Iao Needle Hotel in the beautiful Iao valley. We visited the Needle in the late afternoon and again before breakfast. What happened next seems incredible . . . we were scheduled to go up to Haleakala Crater but the trip had to be cancelled since the road was closed because of ice and snow. Fortunately we had two days on Maui so the schedule was shifted and we drove along the wild windward northern coast to Hana and visited one of the Hawaiian villages that has not noticeably changed in the past 50 years. The new birds added were the American Coot and the beautiful songster, the Chinese Thrush (a Babbler).

By the next day it was possible to go up to Haleakala but several inches of snow remained at the top. The forested region southeast of the crater is the site of the rediscovery of the Maui Nukupuu and the section that has been purchased by Nature Conservancy in order to preserve the habitat for this and perhaps other so-called extinct species that may still remain in these

remote areas. Unfortunately this was not the blooming season for the famous Silver Sword plants (endemic in this localized area) which resemble yuccas but actually are composites.

Back to Oahu where on December 31 we participated in the Christmas Bird Count of the Hawaiian Audubon Society on the Aiea Trail. The new bird for this day was the beautiful Brazilian Cardinal, more common on the lawns of Honolulu than anywhere we visited in Brazil.

New Year's Day we drove around Oahu with our first bird stop at Ulupau Head at Kaneohe Naval base for a close look at the Red-footed Booby Colony. Nearby on Muk Moku Manu Island was a Blue-faced Booby, on the low part of the island with Brown Boobies and Greater Frigatebirds occupying the higher section. We continued around the island to Waipio Settlement Basin near Pearl Harbor where we saw Cattle Egrets, Strawberry Finches and Black-headed Mannikins.

At the Honolulu Zoo we were escorted by the Director, Mr. Jack Throp, for a behind the scenes close look at various Hawaiian species, particularly the Lesser Kauai Thrush, the only one in captivity. Next came a trip to the Bishop Museum where Dr. Edwin Bryant, the director gave us a tour of the Museum and then an opportunity to see skins of some of the rare and extinct birds.

The "Garden Island" of Kauai was our final stop. Our hotel was the Prince Kuhio on the ocean near "Spouting Horn", an old lava tube in which water is forced up geyser-like with most peculiar growling noises. Meals were served in a delightful Tahitian Longhouse where a native firelighting ceremony was performed each evening with a blowing of conch shell horns as part of the activity.

An early departure was scheduled the morning after our arrival for those of us who had arranged to take a helicopter flight from Kokee Lodge into the Alakai Swamp, an area of rare birds and most unusual vegetation. The swamp is adjacent to Mt. Waialeale which is reputed to be the wettest spot in the world with 465 inches of rain annually.

The helicopter flight (three people and the pilot on each run) was very pleasant. As we were landing in the swamp, the pilot asked if we had any food with us. With our negative answer he suggested that we would have to break into the small government cabin located at the landing area if we should be stranded there. The ever present clouds were over the swamp area and there always is a good possibility of a ceiling zero situation developing.

When the entire group of nine who took the extra trip had arrived, eight of us started walking through the swamp area, trying to choose the tufts that were not completely immersed in water. But by sitting quietly near a blooming Chia tree, the silent observer, Carol Kinch, was treated to a good view of an Ooaa. (The Hawaiian names of birds and plants leave much to be desired from our point of view — most of them sound very much alike — a collection of vowels with an occasional consonant thrown in.) We later learned that this bird had not been seen for a period of three years and it is most unfortunate that there was just a single observer. When Carol returned to Honolulu she talked with Dr. Bryant about the observation and saw skins that confirmed her identification.

On our return flight, our pilot took us over Waimea Canyon and then over the Na Pali Wilderness Area with a very fine conservation commentary as we rode along. The canyon is called the Grand Canyon of Hawaii with much justification — the colors are similar, there are beautiful waterfalls and a series of magnificent side canyons in the Na Pali area. As we were flying around numerous White-tailed Tropic Birds sailed along under us. It was truly a "Day for the Gods".

On our last day on Kauai we drove along the east and north coast of the island to Haena. A stop at Lihue Settlement Basin produced a number of the Koloa (Hawaiian) Ducks which may be a separate species or merely a small version of the Mallard. (Splitters vs. lumpers.)

The piece de resistance was found at Kilauea Lighthouse (completing the Kilauea to Kilauea sequence) where we were watching the Red-footed and Brown Boobies along with the Great Frigatebird. Sailing in, close to shore, and then circling to give us a better look, was a Black-footed Albatross to add number 56 and the final touch to a wonderful trip in our beautiful 50th state.

OBSERVATIONS SPRING AND SUMMER BIRDING IN THE ST. LOUIS AREA

J. EARL COMFORT

As far as rare bird species are concerned the 1968 St. Louis area spring and summer birding observations story centers around the Illinois levees below the St. Louis Jefferson Barracks Bridge. To start the ball rolling Jim Ruschill found a brant at the levees on May 4th. Among the later listers of this rare goose observed later in the week were Dick Anderson, Kathryn Arhos, Paul Bauer, the Bremsers, Earl Comfort, Helen Hill and Bertha Massie. On the 12th of the same month Dick and Mildred (Mitzi) Anderson counted 17 levee fish crows. On the 27th Helen Hill and Earl Comfort checked a male scissor-tailed flycatcher there. A female scissortail was found nearby on the 6th of June by 8 observers first spotted by Mary Wiese. On the 2nd of June Dick Anderson had our first area record of a Louisiana heron along the levees, which was seen there on the following day by Chris and Kathryn Arhos and later by Ernie and Kay Mueller. Last, but not least, was a laughing gull on a levee road first identified by Kathryn Arhos on June the 27th.

Some other rare 1968 levee species have been black vulture, Mississippi kite, purple gallinule, Hudsonian godwit and yellow-headed blackbird, not to mention several lesser levee rarities.

The area warbler spring migration was a fairly good one from a birder's standpoint with such rarities as hooded, Connecticut, mourning and Cape May showing up to be counted. Cape Mays and mournings were unusually common.

Spring shorebirding was just so so. Besides the godwit mentioned, avocet, ruddy turnstones and willets caught the birder's eyes. By mid-July there was evidence of a good fall shorebird migration in the making.

1969 AUDUBON CONVENTION

HENRIETTA LAMMERT, *Chairman*

In April Mr. Charles Callison, Executive Vice-President of the National Audubon Society, Mr. Ralph Jones, Convention Chairman, and Mr. Alexander Sprunt, Tour Chairman, came to St. Louis to go over all arrangements for the National Convention, April 25-29, 1969. Your local group worked with them making trial runs of the field trips and covered all details such as busses, lunches, etc.

The set-up for the Convention as it stands at present is for Field Trips to run on Sunday, April 26 and Tuesday, April 28. Trip A will be to Busch Wildlife Area and the Arboretum. Trip B to Pere Marquette State Park and the River area.

Don't miss the thrills of a

NATIONAL AUDUBON CONVENTION

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